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DEPT FOR OES/ETC, OES/PCI, OES/STC, SCA/CEN, EUR/ACE, SCA/RA: AGOEL  
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DOE FOR NNSA  
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TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAID](#) [TBIO](#) [ECON](#) [UZ](#) [ZK](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: FY'08 REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL HUB WORK PLANS FOR TASHKENT

REF: STATE 140185

¶1. Per reftel request, the Central Asian Environment, Science, Technology, and Health Hub (CA ESTH Hub) submits its projected work plan for FY 2008.

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Goals and Objectives  
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¶2. The CA ESTH Hub endeavors to act as a clearinghouse in support of Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) and Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) policies relating to ESTH issues in Central Asia and more broadly in support of USG goals promoting regional stability by fostering sustainable economic development through encouraging the practice of environmentally and economically sound practices and policies.

¶3. In its clearinghouse capacity the Hub works with its constituent posts in the region, the OES and SCA Bureaus, USAID, USDA, CDC, US National Park Service, international donor organizations, UN organizations, the ESTH R&D communities, NGOs, governments in the region, etc. The Hub devotes particular attention to water issues, particularly transboundary water sharing issues in the Aral Sea Basin and related hydropower developments; biodiversity issues such as ecotourism, protected areas management capacity building and infrastructure development, land degradation, and desertification; S&T issues, such as the state of the S&T community in the region, renewable energy, and management of uranium tailings sites and other natural disaster preparedness issues; and health-related issues such as avian influenza preparedness, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, environmental health problems in the Aral Sea region, and the state of public health systems in the region.

¶4. As the Hub follows issues in these areas, it seeks to identify program and project areas, as well as researchers, officials, environmental movement leaders, teachers, experts in various ESTH fields, etc. which/who are pursuing goals that have the potential, if achieved, of furthering USG ESTH policies and goals in the region. The Hub endeavors to identify projects that would promote transboundary cooperation and regional stability. If the Hub has identified a project or an individual with an idea for a project with goals that meet these criteria, the Hub then seeks to garner support for it from regional governments, donor organizations, etc.

15. In functioning as a clearinghouse for ESTH issues and projects in the region, the hub has made key priorities: (1) communications and information sharing and (2) regional outreach.

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General Resources Needed  
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16. In the spring of 2007, the Regional ESTH Officer's (REO) reaccreditation was denied and she left Uzbekistan. The Political/Economic Section has overseen the office in the interim until an officer is posted to the Hub's new location in Kazakhstan. The LES Environmental Specialist in Tashkent provides invaluable institutional memory and works with P/E to plan ESTH's activities. Without a full-time REO, the ESTH office has reduced its activities, limiting travel to Uzbekistan and focusing more on Uzbek environmental issues, especially cross-border issues. With the arrival of a new REO to his/her new post, as is expected to happen in 2008, the office should get back to its full capacity and continue its regional travels.

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Regional Programs and Projects  
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17. As part of the Democracy Grants Commission, the ESTH Tashkent Office launched its ESTH Small Grants Program on a pilot basis in FY 2007. Five projects that approved by the ESTH Committee: support to local decision-making on water issues; use of environmentally-friendly technology for hot water supply; safe waste disposal; environmental education for rural families; and safe drinking water for a remote mountain community. The LES is responsible for overseeing the implementation of these projects. Tashkent requested additional funding for FY 2008 to continue this

program in Uzbekistan.

18. The Hub will continue its efforts with UNESCO's Center for Water Law, Policy and Science, and possibly with ADB, to facilitate the establishment of much needed training-for-trainers and UK-accredited master's programs in international and national water law and policy for Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Land Reclamation curriculum. The Hub believes that this program will provide indispensable legal framework sorely lacking for transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia. As part of overall transboundary water capacity-building initiative, the Hub will also facilitate participation of young specialists in the U.S. Tufts University-led Young Professionals' Forum on Transboundary Waters in Dundee, United Kingdom. Communication among young water professionals will encourage stronger networking to build future trust and understanding on sensitive regional issues.

19. The Hub is looking at opportunities to collaborate with renewable energy institutions and professionals in Uzbekistan and Central Asia to support clean energy development initiatives. Initial assessment of the needs and prospects for renewable energy development in the region suggests that there is much interest from local institutions to collaborate with their U.S. counterparts for capacity building, transfer of ideas and technology, and information exchange.

110. In addition, the Hub plans to work with the Public Affairs Section on International Visitor Programs on ESTH-related issues. Approved programs for FY 2008 program include water resources management and clean energy and alternative fuel solutions programs for water and energy professionals, respectively.

111. The Hub submitted a request for an Embassy Science Fellow for Uzbekistan. If approved for participation, the requested ESF from the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service laboratory in New Orleans will develop, with relevant Uzbekistan counterparts, management strategies for the control of Turkestan termites at the cultural heritage site in Khiva, Uzbekistan.

112. The Hub will continue to work closely with USG agency Central Asian offices, international funding/donor organizations and UN agencies. With these partners, we will identify promising areas/projects further and develop contacts to help promote USG

goals in the region.

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#### Calendar of Activities

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¶13. Given the absence of an REO, the Hub has reduced its activities to the most important, pending the arrival of the new officer in Kazakhstan. The Hub's calendar of activities for the first quarter FY 2008 is:

November, 2007:

Publish newsletter; disseminate ESTH news; work with UNESCO and ADB HQ on international water law program for Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Land Reclamation.

December, 2007:

Publish newsletter; disseminate ESTH news; review CA Hub web page.

¶14. During the rest of FY 2008, activities may include: review Caspian Sea ESTH issues/projects in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan; visit Kabul, Afghanistan (which has not been visited since joining the Hub); schedule visits to unvisited uranium tailings sites in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and sites related to hydropower in Tajikistan; continue investigating the status of protected areas and archeological sites; and continue to seek promising approaches to transboundary land and water issues in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

¶15. The calendar must remain flexible, as Hub experience shows that major meetings and conferences are often announced with little notice. In general, the Hub sets aside one week a month for regional travel, as set out in the communications/outreach plan section below.

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#### Communications/Outreach Plan

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¶16. In accordance with its communications/information sharing priority, the CA hub will concentrate on: (1) publishing its monthly newsletter on Central Asian ESTH initiatives and trends to the broader environmental community, including relevant USG agencies (State, USAID, EPA, DOE, CDC, etc.), international financial institutions, international donor organizations, UN agencies, environmental NGOs and other interested NGOs operating in the region, US embassies in the region, environmental journalists, etc.; (2) continue to upgrade the Central Asian Environmental Hub web page on the Embassy web site by providing additional information in more formats and links to other web sites to increase its effectiveness as a gateway to information about environmental issues in Central Asia; (3) report via cable and e-mail to USG agencies in Washington on regional issues; and (4) identify ESTH projects with the potential to foster sustainable development and stability in the region that may also promote regional cooperation.

¶17. The Hub will not schedule regional outreach programs until the arrival of a new REO.

¶18. The Hub will make every effort to engage officers handling the ESTH portfolio at its constituent posts to promote Washington's policies and priorities on ESTH issues and to make suggestions for possible regional ESTH initiatives. The Hub is pleased to note that officers at the Hub's constituent posts have been very cooperative in working with the Hub to explore ESTH-related issues in their respective countries, even though all have busy portfolios.

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#### Anticipated Training and Capacity Building

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¶19. The LES is currently enrolled in the online course "Introduction to Grants and Cooperative Agreements", which will help Tashkent effectively monitor its ongoing ESTH small grants projects. The Hub plans to enroll the LES in "Monitoring Grants and Cooperative Agreements," to be held at FSI in February 2008.

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